



Dr. Elana Gomel, chair of the English department at TAU, teaching a class.

## Enriching Israeli rock 'n roll with English poetry

I didn't decide to study because I wanted a degree, or because I wanted to be in an academic environment. As a child, I taught myself English from rock 'n roll lyrics that I translated using a dictionary. During my twenties, I wanted to learn about English culture from the deepest sources, and to learn literature and poetry. When I discovered that I could learn about them in a non-technical way, at Tel Aviv University's Department of English Literature, I realized that I had found the ideal environment. There I was taught literature from the heart and from the soul. I may not remember the technical terms, but the unique voices of living poets and their works continue to accompany me. The experience of studying was lovely, albeit brief, and opened a gate for me.

*Sharon Moldavi is an Israeli rock singer and lyricist/composer*

## Milton, Shakespeare and eccentric ex-pats

Ah, those hyacinth days at the English Department, early 1990's, getting a whiff of New England in the Naftali building; it was like going through the rabbit hole: One minute you'd be out in the street, assaulted by the simple fact of living here, the next - you'd be discussing Milton and Shakespeare with an eccentric lot of ex pats.

It was Prof. Brian McHale who got me into Freud, and the incomparable Prof. Zefira Porat, with her intoxicating colloquy, who introduced me to Nietzsche. I remember the day Prof. Bob Griffin made me cry. Then he gave me an award, though I'm not sure it was for best crying. But in all of those bright days, in these peoples' company, I was temporarily salvaged from my Israeli-ness, exiled into ineffable realms where even the lawn smelled like Blake's Jerusalem.

*Shlomzion Kenan is a columnist who is currently working on her PhD in philosophy at EGS, Switzerland. She is the daughter of Amos Kenan, the well-known artist and columnist for Yediot Aharanot, who won the Brenner Prize in 1999.*

studies. The professors and teachers have written scholarly books that have been published by the most prestigious presses and articles that participate in the current academic dialogue, and they regularly participate in conferences and seminars in their field in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Europe. Subjects of current and forthcoming books include the Modern Urban Novel, Masculinity, Writing about Violence, Poetry and Popular Culture, Anonymity, and Subjectivity and the Sacred. The results of this emphasis on research are current and relevant lectures to undergraduate and graduate students, lectures and seminars which prepare them not only for their own independent further enjoyment of

Glass Palace." More information about our latest events can be found on our website:

[www.tau.ac.il/humanities/english](http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/english)

### What do we study?

Because we believe in the necessity of a classic, canonic curriculum as well as diverse alternatives, we offer a variety of intellectually challenging courses and seminars. Courses as basic as Shakespeare, Yeats, Romantic Poetry, Renaissance Literature, Modern Drama, Milton and Jewish-American Literature are offered alongside experimental and diverse choices such as Photography and Literature, Post-Colonial Literature, Poetry and Popular Culture, and Literature of the Body.

## For the love of scholarship

For me, one of the greatest thing about TAU's English Department is that it manages to follow North American standards of scholarship (for the most part), which places it in a rather superior position in comparison to other departments in the humanities. This, I believe, is the result of the simple fact that its teaching faculty was either educated in or is somehow related to North American institutions and scholars. At the same time, however, TAU's English Department still favors real scholarship over professionalism; sadly, the reverse is true for most North American schools. Thus, while North American students are actually encouraged to pursue projects that will make them appealing to the job market, English students at TAU are given much more academic freedom; this really allows them to go where no one has gone before.

*Yisrael Levin is currently studying English literature at TAU*

news anchors, television personalities, radio broadcasters, writers, singers and journalists. But of course not all of our students gravitate to the media. Many have made their careers in advertising, film, and hi-tech fields like branding and web design. Many are editors, teachers, performers, and translators. Some continue their studies after completing their M.A. in the English Department to the Phd program at Tel Aviv University. Some continue their studies in graduate schools abroad: our students have received doctorates in literature from Oxford, Sussex, Princeton, New York University, Yale, and other well known universities.

Most recently, Sameh Zoabi, who graduated from Tel Aviv University with a degree in English Literature and Film Studies, won third prize at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival for his short film, "Be Quiet." Sameh is currently completing his MFA in Film Direction at Columbia University.

### Who are our faculty?

The faculty members of the English Department are well known in Israel and abroad as serious scholars and leaders in their fields. Their impressive biographies, to be found on the web ([tau.ac.il/humanities/english/faculty.html](http://tau.ac.il/humanities/english/faculty.html)), reflect both the level and diversity of

## Studying mankind through books

The study of English literature at Tel Aviv University has allowed me to address a variety of questions that span the spectrum of civilization and human history. It is important to remember that literature touches upon every possible discourse - psychological, religious, historical, social, and even biological; literature is the truest and most consummate lens in which one can observe the world as it offers the most panoramic view. Aldous Huxley summed it up perfectly: "The proper study of mankind is books."

*Julia Cohen is currently studying English literature at TAU*

literature and culture, but also for current discussion in Israel and abroad.

The curriculum in the English Department is frequently enriched with guest lecturers and international conferences here. The department has co-sponsored several conferences, including "Autobiography in American Literature" and "Culture and Knowledge, Power and Society." Guest lecturers have included a vast range of scholars and writers including novelist Gish Jen, Jamaica Kinkaid and former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, and critics Jerome McGann, Susan Gubar, Walter Benn Michaels, J. Hillis Miller and Marjorie Perloff. Next year we will be hosting Amitav Ghosh, one of the most widely known Indians writing in English today, whose most recent book is "The

Although we do not offer a program in Creative Writing, we provide a free no-credit creative writing workshop to students of the English Department, and contests in poetry, translation, and poetry criticism. The annual student poetry reading, which usually features a guest poet from abroad, is open to all students.

We also try to encourage excellence with awards, grants, and several annual contests in which prizes are presented to students for superior critical writing or general achievement.

*Dr. Karen Alkalay-Gut is a professor of English literature at Tel Aviv University*